

NEW LOWELL OFFERING

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Fall 1977

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This is the second issue of the NEW LOWELL OFFERING. Like the original *Lowell Offering*, written and published in the 1840's by young women working in the Lowell mills, the NEW LOWELL OFFERING is produced by women. We are students and faculty at the University of Lowell. Our subject is the contemporary woman, as expressed in poetry, essays, fiction, criticism, art, photography.

With this issue, we initiate two features: "Yesterday," building links with our sisters of the past; and "Women at Work," experiences of women in the workforce today. In our next issue in the spring, we will have a section "Women on Campus" about women's reactions to Lowell and other college campuses.

Contributions for these features, as well as other original essays, poetry, fiction, criticism, artwork and photographs are requested from all members of the Lowell community. Written work should be typed, double-spaced, and all submissions sent to:

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LOWELL OFFERING



"Is Saul also among the prophets?"

A REPOSITORY
OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES, WRITTEN BY
"FACTORY GIRLS."

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EQUAL RIGHTS—WHO SHALL BE THE JUDGE?

by Kathleen McNiff

The term "equal" is ambiguous when it is applied to any suppressed or minority group because there are differences between that group and the dominant group. Indians have cultural traditions that the rest of us do not; blacks and other minorities attend ghetto schools and suburban whites do not; women bear children and men do not. Even though "equality" has ambiguous qualities, people should be given the opportunity to realize their potential (regardless of differences). They should have the right to choose freely the nature of their employment, the degree of their education, and the direction their lives will take. Today, only men are able to make these decisions for themselves; i.e., white men.¹

Even though women have physiological differences from men, our object is to gain total social equality. While considerable progress has been made in a number of areas—notably, in legislation dealing with prostitution, rape, credit, employment, abortion, and the ERA—we still have a long way to go. Equality between men and women is a state of mind, and not a law passed by Congress. There are three basic groups of people in our society: liberated women, non-liberated women, and men. In order for total equality to be achieved, all these groups must abolish centuries-old ideas that women are inferior. Equal rights is only half of the problem: the attitudes of society must be altered to accept women as equals of men.

The year 2000 is now 23 years away. Who knows what male and female roles will be then? Legislative change will undoubtedly affect the way society operates, but the way in which the children of this generation are socialized can transform the future roles of men and women. Before involving ourselves in thoughts of the future, however, let us consider the present.

A very clear example of my theory concerning equal rights involves the proposed legalization of prostitution. There is a movement right now to legalize prostitution; but, if legalized, how long will it be before it is accepted

as just another profession? According to the National Organization for Women, which opposes legalization and supports decriminalization, women have a right to do what they want with their bodies. NOW also argues that it is unfair to arrest prostitutes and not customers. Although opposed to legalized prostitution, Boston's Police Commissioner, Joseph Jordan, favors legislation that would prosecute males as well as females.² Even though his is a progressive viewpoint, it still appears to be a little idealistic. This is so because society still considers that prostitution, the selling of one's body for sexual intercourse, is a woman's crime. It doesn't seem just that, if both parties are willing to have sexual intercourse, the woman should be deemed more guilty than the man. Therefore, it seems obvious that the common beliefs about the inequalities between men and women must be abolished in order for there to be true equality. It is not enough to legalize or decriminalize prostitution if society does not really believe that women deserve the right to do what they want with their bodies.

Legislation concerning prostitution denies women control over their bodies. Rape legislation, however, frequently condemns women for lack of control over their bodies. To quote from *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, "Men are often excused for their sexual aggressiveness because of the 'uncontrollable' sex drive," in rape cases.³ Even though the book goes on to say that this has been proved a myth, the fact remains that it is a common belief. Once again, the legal system represents the white, male-dominated status quo. When a woman does not resist, but instead succumbs to rape in order to avoid being both raped and severely beaten, it is often assumed that she has consented.⁴ Again, common social attitudes, unfortunately shared by a large number of women, condemn her. In 1975, all but three states (California, Florida, and Iowa) required that none of the accused's prior arrests for similar offenses be brought up at a rape trial. The rape victim had no such protection; her sex life might be explored at length during the

trial because it was she who must prove she was actually raped.⁵ The legislation recently passed in Massachusetts states that past sexual experiences of a woman prosecuting a rapist may not be brought forth as evidence against her at any time during the trial. Previously, if a woman had a boyfriend with whom she had had sexual relations, and she was in court trying to convict an alleged rapist, she had hardly a chance of winning. Not only did she not win, but she was badgered by lawyers and virtually had to relive the rape. Hopefully, this new legislation will aid in the conviction of more of the rapists prosecuted in the future. It is estimated that there are eight to ten times more rapes committed than reported; perhaps this legislation, by making the judicial process more equitable, will give women courage to report this crime and subsequently to prosecute their attackers.

Still, more than legislation alone is needed to give women the protection they need against rapists. The minimum sentence for a man convicted of rape in the United States remains one year in some states, and such a sentence applies, of course, only to those convicted of rape. The jury in a rape case consists of twelve of our peers; twelve people who may still hold some of the common beliefs stated earlier. Supposedly irrelevant variables, such as the victim's physical appearance, may affect the outcome of the trial. Only through different socialization of our children and our grandchildren may these beliefs be abolished and total equality be given to all men and women. It is not enough to pass legislation; the society must be made to realize that women deserve the same treatment as men.

The Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Equal Opportunity Employers Act are further legal steps toward this end, as both outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex. Some aspects of these laws do overlap the Equal Rights Amendment, which needs to be passed by only three more states before it becomes law. The passage of all these smaller acts concerned with employment and credit may seem to be useless, therefore; but I do not believe that they are. The ERA states the following:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

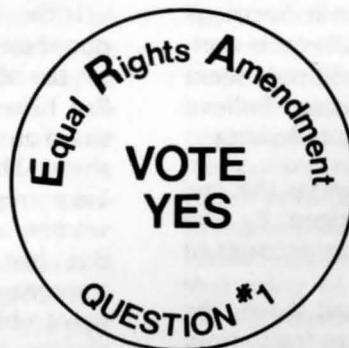
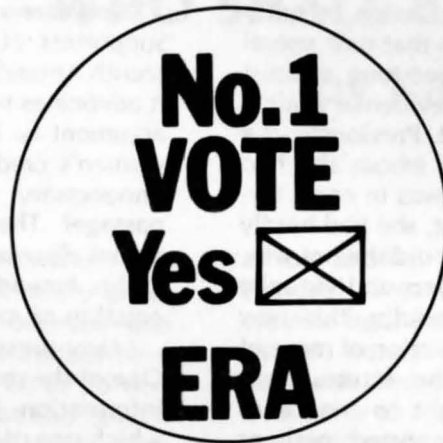
Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Supporters of the ERA argue that the Fourteenth Amendment is inadequate even though it advocates non-discriminatory practices. My argument is: if these various acts concerning women's credit, jobs, and other rights were unnecessary, why is the ERA on its way to passage? There obviously continues to be sexual discrimination. As a result, the Equal Rights Amendment is all the more vital to the equality of American women.

Many pressing issues face ERA supporters. One of the most pressing is the distribution of information. I recently saw a documentary in which one of the women "leads" was so ignorant of the world around her that if she wanted the answer to a question, her husband insisted she ask him instead of going to outside sources. Women in poverty areas and many suburban wives do not know their rights, and the sad thing is that many do not care to know. In *The Stepford Wives*, Ira Levin depicts a middle-class white utopia: men kill their wives and substitute look-alike mechanical dolls which represent ideal housewives. It is an excellent book; it makes you review your own role in society and think about whether or not you, as a woman, are a real person or just another robot attending to the needs and wants of your husband and children. It was noticeable that the blank looks on the doll's faces, interrupted only by pleasant wifely smiles, were not programmed for the likes of the ERA. The book was more than a murder mystery; it was a sociological review of the ideal role of women in our society. The element underlying the whole story was the murder of the wives; but, more concretely, it was the expression of the beliefs of some men. They believe that a wife should be very pleasant, sociable, uncomplaining, forgiving, efficient, and of course, willing to please her husband in any way he desires.

Is this the role that women should have in our society? Believe me, I am not pressuring for the abolition of marriage, and the family. But I do believe that women have a right to share equally in these give-and-take relationships. There are problems here, of course. Take reproduction, for example: clearly, women and only women can bear children. But just imagine what would happen if tomorrow, suddenly, men were able to conceive children! Imagine there also being no change in their social position as workers, businessmen, and self-acclaimed superior in-



tellectuals, just an alteration in reproductive systems. Naturally, in the hypothetical world, some men would want to carry their pregnancies to term. But certainly others would insist on aborting pregnancies on the grounds that they had the right to control their bodies and their lives. Men have always enjoyed personal control over their lives, and it seems unlikely that they would be put off by religious rhetoric or want to jeopardize their careers, risking professional replacement by women. Since men make the laws, there would probably be a sudden lifting of the ban on abortion, followed by passage of laws forbidding doctors to refuse to perform abortions on request, and the establishment of abortion clinics at every local shopping center. The law probably would not require pregnant men to get the consent of their wives before having abortions; and men probably would not talk so much about consulting the clergy or a psychiatrist to reassure themselves what they were doing was right.⁶

Even though this situation is purely hypothetical, it serves to show how women deserve the right to control their bodies. Legislation has recently been passed to increase woman's control over her body; however, such laws are not without restrictions. It would be ideal if contraceptives were widely enough used by both men and women to eliminate the need for abortions, but this is not yet a reality. The circulation of birth control literature, as well as information on women's legal rights, is probably one of the greatest problems faced by the women's movement today.

The struggle to achieve equal rights, and, more importantly, the struggle to gain equality, are very important issues now and will probably be even more meaningful in the future. There are some interesting feminist visions of what our society will be like in the future. "A Letter From Santa Fe" depicts a world of communal living where everyone is equal in the eyes of the group.⁷ An even more provocative vision, from "Pages from a Notebook Found in San Diego," has our country split in half, one side female, the other side male, in 2001.⁸ Reproduction is mechanical, and each sexual 'side' socializes its children to believe their sex superior. In addition to these forecasts there is one more closely resembling my own hopes, in an essay by Alice S. Rossi. In "Visions for the Future" she describes the life of the young woman of the future.

She will be reared as her brother will be reared, with a combination of loving warmth, firm discipline, household responsibility

and encouragement of independence and self-reliance. She will not be pampered and indulged, subtly taught to achieve her ends through coquetry and tears, as so many girls are taught today. She will view domestic skills as useful tools to acquire, some of which, like fine cooking or needlework, having their own intrinsic pleasures but most of which are necessary repetitive work best gotten done as quickly and efficiently as possible. She will be able to handle minor mechanical breakdowns in the home as well as her brother can, and he will be able to tend a child, press, sew, and cook with the same easy skills and comfortable feeling as his sister has.

During their school years, both sister and brother will increasingly assume responsibility for their own decisions, freely experiment with numerous possible fields of study, gradually narrowing to a choice that best suits their interests and abilities rather than what is considered appropriate or prestigious work for men and women....

The girl will not feel the pressure to belittle her accomplishments, lower her aspirations, learn to be a receptive listener in her relationships with boys, but will be as true to her growing sense of self as her brother and male friends are. ...Her intellectual aggressiveness as well as her brother's tender sentiments will be welcomed and accepted as human characteristics, without the self-questioning doubts of latent homosexuality. ...She will not cling to her parents, nor they to her. ...She will learn to take pleasure in her own body and a man's body and to view sex as a good and wonderful experience. ...and not as a test of her competence as a female or her partner's competence as a male....

Marriage for our hypothetical woman will not mark a withdrawal from the life and work pattern she has established...Marriage will be a "looking outward in the same direction" for both the woman and her husband...She will marry and bear children only if she deeply desires a mate and children, and will not be judged a failure as a person if she decides against either...will view her pregnancies, childbirth and early months of motherhood...equally important highlights in her life, experienced intensely and with joy but not as the exclusive basis for a sense of self-fulfillment and purpose in life...Both the woman and the man will feel that unless a man can make room in his life

for parenthood, he should not become a father...The children will have a less intense involvement with their mother, and she with them, and they will all be better for it....for her own independent activities will continue to expand....She will be neither an embittered housewife, an interfering mother-in-law nor an idle parasite, but together with her husband she will be able to live an independent, purposeful and satisfying third act in life.⁹

The question to be answered now is: how much change is necessary to achieve this goal? When I read this, I thought about my own childhood and adolescence. How different is my life from that of this hypothetical woman, or, for that matter, from the public view of woman? It is different in many ways, but I do not believe that this concept of the future is really that inconceivable. It depicts a world which may be achieved through socialization of our children.

Only such a revision of child-rearing prac-

tices can produce the attitudinal change necessary to alter the status quo. Legislation concerning prostitution, rape, abortion, credit and jobs, and the ERA has been discussed; it is obvious that legislation does not automatically transform attitudes.

With this, I would like to conclude by saying that writing this has been quite an experience for me. A great deal of it has been based on my own ideas, and that took a lot of thought. As a woman, I had to evaluate my life in terms of standards of equality, and what I intend to do with my life. I did not make any earth-shattering decisions to become a radical, but I feel that I know myself better. One of the most difficult things to do is to develop a truly personal perspective on life by overcoming attitudes acquired from parents and the society as a whole. This takes many years, perhaps a whole lifetime, but when you know yourself, when you actively choose your own direction in life, you have achieved the greatest accomplishment of all.

Footnotes

¹Elsie Adams and Mary Louise Briscoe, *Up Against the Wall, Mother: On Women's Liberation* (New York: Glencoe Press, 1971), p. 363.

²Andrew Blake, "Prostitution: The Attitudes Are Changing," *Boston Sunday Globe*, February 13, 1977, pp. A1, A4.

³The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 92.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵Shana Alexander, *Women's Legal Rights* (Los Angeles: Wollstonecraft, Inc., 1975), p. 119.

⁶Adams and Briscoe, p. 362.

⁷Sylvia Feldman, "A Letter from Santa Fe," *The Rights of Women* (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., 1974), p. 99.

⁸Sylvia Feldman, "Pages from a Notebook Found in San Diego," *The Rights of Women*, p. 93.

⁹*The New Feminism in Twentieth Century America*, ed. June Sochen (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1971), pp. 203-205.

AN ACROSTIC.

Lo! our offering here we bring—
On the altar now it lies!
We have touched the spirit-string—
Even now its notes arise.
Lowly is the strain we sing—
Let none spurn the gift we bring.

Ours is not a costly gem,
From the mine of Ophir brought;
Fame's bright jewelled diadem
Ever here may not be sought.
Richer far the gift you'll find,
If you'll scan its pages o'er;
Nought but fruits of heart and mind,
Gathered from the spirit's store.

DORA.

—from the *Lowell Offering*

Yesterday

"Suicide in Lowell. Miss Emma C. Ives, twenty six years of age, employed in the dressing-room of the Hamilton Corporation at Lowell, drowned herself Friday morning last, in the Hamilton Canal. She left home in Stanstead, C.B. Canada, without the knowledge or consent of her father, and against his wishes, which circumstance, together with the fact of her not being in good health, physically, probably caused a slight mental aberration. Having learned that her relatives were about to send for her, she wrote a very affectionate farewell letter to her younger sister, and put an end to her existence, as above stated."

Item from the *Haverhill Tri Weekly Publisher*, May 31, 1859.

The documents of women's history are often incomplete, obscure or unclear, but better understanding of the evidence can flow from a knowledge of the circumstances of women's lives in patriarchal society.

It is clear that not all of the Lowell mill "girls" came to the city to earn money for the family mortgage, to send their brothers to college or to amass a dowry. Some of the women, like Emma Ives, came out of desperation, in escape from patriarchal family control, traveling long distances to the only places where women in the early nineteenth century could earn enough money in factory work to support themselves. Why Emma Ives' health

was impaired is not clear. Was she pregnant? Was she seeking employment and/or an abortion in the new city? Why was she afraid to return to her father? What claim did a father have on a twenty six year old woman? Rather than a "mental aberration," was her choice of suicide an act of personal freedom like Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*? What was in that letter to her younger sister?

It is time that historians analyze more carefully what work in the Lowell mills could mean to women in the nineteenth century and why they came to Lowell.

--Mary Blewett

THE FAMILY AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by Joyce M. Antle

A major aspect of the Women's Liberation Movement is its concern over the way in which our society's present family structure, that of the patrilinear nuclear family, promotes the oppression of women. Many feminist authors share a common belief that "patriarchy's chief institution is the family."¹

Basic to the family structure, of course, is the institution of marriage. Feminists argue that it is logical to begin here to build a mass movement of women, since marriage affects most women.² Most young girls are raised, or pressured by the subtle socialization process of society, to have marriage as their primary goal in life. They grow up believing in the distorted images of the "ideal family": a handsome husband, perfect children, beautiful house, etc. Because of these preconceived notions, they often enter into marriage blindly, only to be shocked by the reality of their new situation. Once married, they find themselves bound by the "unwritten contract" of marriage.

As a basic term of this agreement, the wife is to provide domestic services such as house-keeping, child care, food purchasing and preparation for her husband and family. She is to perform these services without payment. She is to engage in sexual intercourse with her husband and none other. She must follow him to any suitable living place of his choice and live with him there, for as long as he wishes to remain. In his turn, the husband agrees to provide his wife and children with a place to live, food, clothing, and other necessities in accordance with his ability. He agrees to have sexual intercourse with his wife and no other. But what is important is that, as a result of this contract, most women experience partial, if not total economic dependence upon their husbands.³

This unequal arrangement is often compared to a master-slave relationship.⁴ The husband generally has the upper hand, because he is physically stronger than his wife. Thus he can threaten her with physical and sexual abuse. Also, since he provides the family income, there is the ever-present threat

of withdrawal of financial support or total desertion, a threat which does not have to be openly voiced to be felt. In view of this double threat facing women who marry, one might wonder why women have continued to follow this same lifestyle pattern for generations. Sheila Cronan, in her article on The Feminists' views of marriage, attempts to explain this phenomenon by stating that the

female role has been internalized in so many successive generations. If people are forced into line long enough, they will begin to believe in their own inferiority and to accept as natural the role created for them by their oppressor...society has been so structured that there is no real alternative to marriage for women. Employment discrimination, social stigma, fear of attack, sexual exploitation are only a few of the factors that make it nearly impossible for women to live as single people.⁵

Many women, and our society as a whole, have come to believe in our present family structure and the role it assigns to women as being the natural order of life. As Juliet Mitchell states, however, "there is nothing inevitable about the form or role of the family any more than there is about the character or role of women. It is the function of ideology to present these given social types as aspects of nature itself."⁶ This internalization of beliefs is perpetuated by the process of socialization of the young.

To Kate Millett, "the chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young (largely through the example and admonition of their parents) into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes towards the categories of role, temperament, and status." She notes that "to insure that its critical functions of reproduction and socialization of the young take place only within its confines, the patriarchal family insists upon legitimacy...patriarchy decrees that the status of both child and mother is primarily or ultimately dependent upon the male."⁷

Since our society considers this process of socialization to be important, and since most of it is provided by women, the need for this service is often used as an argument for keeping women in the home, with their children, and out of the work force. Juliet Mitchell sees the process of socialization as oppressive to women accordingly; but she also believes that "there is no inherent reason why the biological and social mother should coincide."⁸ Many people, in fact, are beginning to feel that children would be better socialized by people other than, or in addition to, their mothers. Elizabeth Janeway has noted that

the Women's Movement emphasizes the importance of child raising and socialization to the community at large by seeking the participation of others in this process. Such participation provides the positive result of variety in role models and avoids the negative effect of binding the child too tightly within the maternal relationship.⁹

Janeway adds that "much anthropological evidence can be cited, plus that from earlier periods of our own history, to indicate that the present American pattern of consigning small children to the sole care of the mother is unusual."¹⁰

The pattern has wider implications. Our capitalistic society supports the patriarchal family structure because it in turn helps to perpetuate capitalism. The present role of women in society and in the family is essential to the continuation of capitalism. Betsy Warrior argues that

Women are not just laborers in the male-defined sense of the word. Women are the source of all labor in that they are the producers of all laborers. This is the basic means of production (reproduction) in any society. It creates the first commodity, female and male laborers, who in turn create all other commodities and products. Men as the ruling class profit from this commodity through its labor.¹¹

Generally, commodity production is considered to be "man's work," of course. Women are used as a marginal labor force, hired during prosperous times, only to find themselves laid off when the economy slows down. Married women living with their husbands thus provide a measure of expansion in the

market for goods and services in boom times. The practice of firing women at other times cushions the full consequences of recession; and the women's increased home production partially makes up for their lost salaries.¹²

The patriarchal family helps to reinforce capitalism in other ways. First, the structure of the family is advantageous. A worker who has a family that depends upon him for economic support will generally be more conscientious and easier to "keep in line" at the place of employment.¹³ In return for the economic support they receive from the male, the family provides him with emotional support by looking up to him, expressing confidence in him, loving him, etc. The wife is especially involved in this process and tries to make her husband's home life comfortable and happy by doing such things as fixing up the house and working to keep herself attractive for him. She is supporter and restorer of the male ego after the workplace has damaged it.

At home the male worker is boss. He can transfer tensions developed at work to the family, thus lowering the probability that he will focus anger on the workplace.¹⁴ Sheila Rowbotham comments that "home shields the man from the destructive effects of struggle and competition. It is the only place left in which he can simply be 'himself'."¹⁵ A man's opportunity to be 'himself' in this sense is available, however, only by restricting a woman's ability to be 'herself.' Is there any place where a woman can be herself? The Women's Liberation Movement attempts to help answer this question by providing them with consciousness-raising groups, which help them to discover their desires, goals, etc. It attempts to show women the options they have in addition to those of being housewives and mothers. It tries to help women redefine their existence in terms other than those of a relationship with a husband.

In such a relationship a woman is a consumer and unpaid domestic. Since consumption is necessary to maintain an efficient capitalist society, capitalism makes a place for the dependent woman as consumer. The woman uses her husband's wages to buy products for the family. Conflict may arise, if the wife consumes more products than the husband thinks necessary, or if he does not earn enough to provide material possessions like those of similar families. But guilt on the part of the woman working for wages can be useful. She can be led to buy things for her family out of guilt for spending time away

from home and what are seen as her duties. More generally, a family can purchase commodities they could not otherwise afford, if the wife is also a wage-earner.¹⁶

At present, women at home provide free domestic services, which are the source of another link between patriarchy and capitalism. Domestic services (housework, childcare, etc.) are necessary functions for comfortable living, but there is no reason for them to be done primarily by unpaid housewives. Many feminists believe that unpaid domestic work is basic to the inequality of the sexes. Sheila Cronan believes that "attack on such issues as employment discrimination is superfluous. As long as women are working for nothing in the home we cannot expect our demands for equal pay outside the home to be taken seriously."¹⁷

Unfortunately, getting men to share domestic chores is not an easy task, for the obvious reason that men would have to give up free time to do very unfulfilling work. As Pat Mainardi notes in "The Politics of Housework," men are used to having someone wait on them and not used to doing monotonous repetitive work which results in no lasting or important achievement. She adds,

Sometimes it is traumatizing for a man to come to the realization that in his daily life he has been accepting and implementing (and benefiting from) the exploitation of a woman (his wife) with the rationalization that women don't mind doing the dirty work.¹⁸

How is this situation that oppresses women to be changed? How can the Women's Liberation Movement help? In her article "Radical Feminism 1," Bonnie Kreps describes the three major orientational divisions within the movement. She comments,

The Women's Liberation Movement is a generic term covering a large spectrum of positions. Broadly speaking, the movement can be divided into three areas: (1) the largely economically oriented (usually Marxist) segment which sees liberation for women as part of a socialist revolution; (2) liberal groups like the National Organization for Women....working for some kind of integration of women into the main fabric of society and (3) radical feminism, which chooses to concentrate exclusively on the oppression of women as *women* (and not as workers, students, etc.)¹⁹

These differences in orientation reflect ideological differences which emphasize certain aspects of society as being particularly oppressive. Some emphasize the structural aspect of our society, with men being the heads of families, businesses, government, and all other social institutions. Others are more concerned with cultural influences which affect the way women look at women, as well as the way men view women. These different orientations give rise to different "plans of attack" or alternatives which are considered necessary to attain the movement's goal, equality of the sexes.

Juliet Mitchell, who sees the causal chain of women's oppression to be "maternity, family, absence from production and public life, sexual inequality," advocates the easy availability of contraceptives.²⁰ She believes that

once childbearing becomes totally voluntary...it need no longer be the sole or ultimate vocation of women; it becomes one option among others. The fact of overwhelming importance is that easily available contraception threatens to dissociate sexual from reproductive experience—which all contemporary bourgeois ideology tries to make inseparable as the *raison d'être* of the family.²¹

Others such as Betsy Warrior and Elizabeth Janeway favor effective day-care, although Janeway's main emphasis is on the socialization of children. She believes that it should be a community project, not just the responsibility of the mother. She has written that

what the family needs is a recreation, artificially, of the old community connections, the old extended family. Communal living is one way to do this....Another approach (would be) establishment of childhood enrichment centers or youth environments, or assemblies for educational opportunities...Bring the community back home and open the home to the community.²²

Margaret Benston, on the other hand, advocates socialized domestic service. She explains that under a socialist society

the conversion of private domestic labor into a public industrythe forces of production would operate for human welfare, not private profit, and the result should be liberation, not dehumanization....(and) result in better production, i.e., better food, more comfortable surroundings, more intel-



ligent and loving child-care, etc., than in the present nuclear family.²³

Finally, lesbians advocate total separation from sexual relations with men (marriage, etc.), which they see as basic to the oppression of women.

All these ideas sound feasible in varying degrees and would probably be effective if

implemented on a large scale basis. I think a change in the present family structure and, especially, the role it designates to women must be accomplished, however, before sexual equality can be achieved. Until the Women's Movement becomes more unified as to its ideology and methods of change, it seems unlikely that total sexual equality will be obtained.

Footnotes

¹Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon Books, 1970), p. 55.

²Sheila Cronan, "Marriage," *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), p. 220.

³*Women in Transition: A Feminist Handbook on Separation and Divorce* (New York: Women in Transition, Inc., 1975), pp. 140-145.

⁴See Cronan, p. 219.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

⁶Juliet Mitchell, *The Longest Revolution* (Somerville, Mass.: New England Free Press, n. d.), p. 1.

⁷Millett, p. 58.

⁸Mitchell, p. 19.

⁹Elizabeth Janeway, *Between Myth and Morning: Women Awakening* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1974), p. 86.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹¹"Housework: Slavery or Labor of Love," *Radical Feminism*, p. 212.

¹²Nancy Hartsock, "Political Change: Two Perspectives on Power," *Quest*, I (Summer, 1974), 18-19.

¹³*Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵*Women, Resistance and Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 70.

¹⁶See Hartsock, 18.

¹⁷Cronan, p. 219.

¹⁸*Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 448.

¹⁹*Radical Feminism*, p. 238.

²⁰Mitchell, p. 20.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 11.

²²Janeway, pp. 60-61.

²³*The Political Economy of Women's Liberation* (Somerville, Massachusetts: New England Free Press, n. d.), p. 6-7.





I am a child of the night,
an illusion,
A golden fantasy,
And you
my friend of many moods,
do not exist at all

by Patricia Senecal

WOMEN AT WORK

The following accounts are excerpts from longer essays in which the writers place their personal experiences in various perspectives afforded by recent theorists of the Women's Movement. We think the accounts are enlightening enough to stand on their own. They detail common experiences of the young woman today in the workplace.

The Editors.

I
My first summer at the Lowell Gas Company, the only place I have ever worked, was spent figuring out budgets and punching budget books. I worked under a girl a couple of years older than I who was responsible for the entire budget program. We got along well together, so well that she trained me to take over her job. When she graduated from college and found a full-time job, I took over hers on my return last summer for my second year at the Gas Company.

At first the job was the same old thing, except that the budgets I had previously figured were now figured by computer. So I just checked the computer sheets and made corrections where necessary. After the books were prepared and sent out through the mail, however, the phone calls began. I then spent the summer speaking to people with all kinds of complaints, and with some very interesting reactions.

The first few phone calls I received concerning budgets were from women who questioned the increase in the amount of the monthly payments over the previous year's. They accepted the explanations I gave them and thanked me for taking the time to go over their individual accounts with them. Not all the phone calls I received were that simple or courteous. The headaches began with one particular phone call I will never forget. This was from a man who wished to speak to someone about his budget increase. He had been transferred from the Credit Department, which often took care of minor budget problems, to my office. When I answered my phone, I was confronted with quite a shock. The gentleman wouldn't let me get a word in. When he finally stopped talking

long enough for me to speak, he refused to listen to my reasoning. He asked to talk to someone "in charge." I told him he was speaking to the woman "in charge," and he replied, "I want to speak to someone with authority; I want to speak to a man."

I tried to tell him he was speaking to the *person* with authority in the department, but he told me he didn't care whether I was authorized to answer his questions or not: he still wanted to talk to a man. Very reluctantly, I handed the call to one of the men, a complaint official, who took care of him. At first I took the incident as a personal offense. But as more calls like his continued to come in, I realized the insult to all women they implied.

What was more shocking was that it wasn't from men alone that I received such rejections. Women helped make me aware that I was still "only a woman." I not only met rejection from customers on the phone, I also encountered resistance from other women who answered phones in the Credit Department. They didn't like having to check with a woman before making changes on a customer's budget. Checking with the credit manager was fine with them, because the credit manager was a man. So long as any authority over them was a man, they didn't mind answering to him. They minded answering to any woman. Perhaps, in their view, a woman should go no higher than simply answering phones.

I was naive when I began my job. The reason for my naivete was that I had always been treated as a full human being at home and at school. I had been given opportunities according to my abilities. I soon learned, however, that the



work world was a different story. Even though I was brought up to believe I had the same career possibilities as a man, I know now I don't, at least in the present society. The socialization process has produced a society which programs women to be mothers, housewives, and secretaries. The few who try to escape the stereotypes are shot down by people brainwashed to believe women should not be on the same level as men. Maybe I'm wrong. But I tend to think this is so.

Maura O'Neil



II

For the past two years I've been working in a hardware store, and I've observed and experienced people's attitudes and behavior concerning male and female roles. During my first few months there, the sexist reactions were incredible. I was confronted with verbal statements and other overt signs of disapproval of my position. One of the most exasperating and frequent reactions from customers was their reply when I asked if I could help them. They would say, "Well, you probably don't know this, *but*," in a blatantly condescending tone. About ninety percent of the time, when people entered the store and saw a male counterpart and myself, they approached him. Sometimes after I asked if I could help, they still directed their questions to the man.

It seems that any man is automatically considered knowledgeable in this field. As a woman I still have to prove myself repeatedly, even with regular customers. Perhaps the question that I find most disturbing is that from numerous people who come in and unhesitatingly inquire, "Is there a man around?" Or, "Is there anyone around here who knows something about plumbing, or paint?" They are completely oblivious to the fact that I might know. Even when I do help them, their attitude remains somewhat patronizing. Of course, there are also the regular customers who come in with a friend and say something like, "Ask her; she knows a lot *for a girl*." And then there are the many men who seem to need to challenge me. Their requests begin, typically, with: "I'll bet you don't know, but I'll ask anyway." What infuriates me is that, if I don't know, I realize that I'm reinforcing their stereotyped images of male-female roles. For the same reason I don't welcome the over-solicitous behavior of some men who insist upon doing something which I can do in the store. I can usually distinguish between those who genuinely wish to help me and those who want to do something because they feel it a man's duty to help all women with physical tasks.

Sexist behavior isn't limited to men, I should add. Many women come in and are equally startled to discover a female clerk. They also look around for some man to help them. The women are often very unsure of themselves, having been sent by their husbands. Typically, they doubt the validity of what I tell them. They say to me, quite openly, "Why don't you ask *him*? He'll know." Or else, as soon as one of my male co-workers appears on the scene, they'll seek confirmation of my advice from him. For them, his merely being a male means he'll understand what their problem is.

And many women do have a problem. Whereas the men who come in appear confident and seem to understand what they want, the women often come in stating matter-of-factly that they don't know what "he" wants; they "don't understand." Whereas the men have come in to make purchases for maintenance chores they will perform, the women have typically come in to buy materials for their husbands. Such women seem wholly dependent upon men. Some even hesitate to make a decision about their purchase without their husband's approval. Frequently women ask to call home so as to check to see if they are succeeding in getting the right thing. When both husband and wife are in the store, on

occasion, the woman defers to her husband. She exclaims repeatedly, "I don't understand this at all." No wonder she seems to consider that women in general are incapable of understanding a job like this. She believes that men naturally know it all here, as in other fields.

Alicia Poulin



III

I work in a department store three nights a week. Along with other women in the store, I have to put up with many things I think should not be. Sometimes there are situations that disgust and disturb me. For one example, the store's housewares department, which is located right near the office, once received a number of paintings. They were of naked or semi-naked women and were displayed right in front of the office. The women working in the office did not appreciate this display, so they made a request that the pictures be taken down and replaced by something a little more tasteful. Their request was denied. The women were told by an upper authority that the pictures were staying right where they were because they would attract people's attention. The people coming to the office to take care of their money matters, they were told, would notice the pictures right away. Subsequently, the women had to listen to comments from the male personnel, as well as comments from the

male customers.

An incident involving one of the paintings happened to me. A store manager thought that a girl in this painting resembled me. He brought the picture over to me and told me how much the girl looked like me. Of course, that's not all he said. He added that only the face looked like me, suggesting that the girl in the picture was much more voluptuous than I. When he made the comment, other people were around, so I felt very embarrassed and self-conscious. For the rest of the evening I had to listen to remarks from other men in the store. They made me feel as though I were on display.

I think that the men in the store generally regard women as sex objects. After the New Year, for instance, there was a period of lay-offs. Most of the women let go were Christmas help. There was one woman, though, who was hired around Christmas time, but was not laid off. She was not a terrific worker. Her distinction was that she looked like Farrah Fawcett-Majors. The manager decided that he didn't want her to be fired, because he wanted "something to look at." He also said that they needed someone in the men's department to attract the men to the department. She "could do the trick." Meanwhile he laid off one woman who had been working at the store for six years. Because she was not attractive enough, apparently, she had just been there, in the shadows.

Even a female supervisor may work unnoticed. Actually, there is only one female supervisor in the whole store. She got the job because a male supervisor left suddenly, and the management was in a bind. The female supervisor does more than the men. They have to run their departments and take their calls. She not only has the duties of a supervisor, but has to be a cashier between calls on the floor. She has these duties, I should add, but no important responsibilities. She does not run a department. There are also certain times when her signature is not valid. Not surprisingly, she rarely gets any recognition for her hard work. She does not even get paid any more than a regular sales clerk; and, unlike the male supervisors, she does not receive a commission.

If a woman is doing the same job as a man, I think she should be paid the same amount as the man. If a woman is doing a better job than a man, she should get paid more than the man does. As I've seen from working in the store, this is not always the case. I really don't know what the best solution to the problem would be. I guess the only way to deal with it is to just

face it head-on. If the situation arises, you should protest and fight it. Women are going to have to make their position known and make men realize that we will not always be walked over.

Linda Rimas



IV

The jobs I have held include one at a fast-food restaurant I'll call Tony's and two at small factories I'll call Simmons and Johnson's.

At Tony's the girls were given the counter jobs. There they served the public with a smile, as though recalling that the serving of food is part of domestic "woman's work." The boys that worked in this restaurant did the cooking in the back. Depending on the type of cooking you're doing, of course, cooking can be considered very masculine. A man cooking on a hot grill in a restaurant might be compared with a man at home cooking steaks on a grill outside.

Besides serving, the women kept the dining room clean. They would stand over in a corner of the room and wait for someone to make a mess of the place. Then they would proceed to clean up the mess as quickly as possible. They were again doing traditional "women's work" by cleaning up after people. Customers could see the girls working hard to make them feel "at home."

The job of "lot duty" fell to the boys. Their job was to make sure the parking lot was kept clean. Of course, they didn't stand in the corner and wait for someone to throw something out the window, because that would have looked stupid. The boys would go out when the lot looked messy. Their job of cleaning the parking lot seemed masculine, I suppose, because "man and the outdoors go together."

I worked part-time at Tony's. When I applied at Simmons, I was desperate for a full-time job. In this shop the job was listed as penographing. This is the writing of names on namepins. The job interview was very interesting, because, when giving a description of the work, the male supervisor told me, "This is the kind of work that is good for girls your age; boys couldn't stand to sit still all day." He compared the job to typing and noted that girls could sit still all day and type. No males were hired for the penographing job, which paid minimum wages, incidentally. Most of the employees in the shop as a whole were women. Apart from the penographing, some sections had women doing equally exciting jobs, like painting the pins.

The supervisor may have said, "This is the kind of work that is good for girls your age; boys couldn't stand to sit still all day." Maybe what he meant was that "boys *wouldn't* sit still all day doing this kind of job for the money we'll be paying you." Or maybe he meant that "women can take working a boring job with nothing to stimulate their minds because they don't have real minds anyway." Although I knew I should have started an argument over his very casual statement, I did need the job, so I just sat there and smiled. The job was worth the humiliation to me at that time.

Probably these jobs will always be filled by women, unless the companies themselves change their attitudes. Women like myself will sit by and take this abuse because they need the job.

While working at Simmons I would often sit and think about how ridiculous it was to be doing a job an ape might have done, just because I was a girl. I also sat thinking how ironic it was that I was going away in only one month to be trained as an engineer. True, I seemed to have no more intelligence than most of the women there; but I also seemed to have no less intelligence than the rare males at the shop.

My third job was at a small factory-type shop in my hometown. There women put little pins in little holes. The process may sound tedious, and it was. Most of the women were between

the ages of sixteen and nineteen, although there were a couple of older women of perhaps forty-five. The only males that worked in this entire shop were the two brothers that ran it. Another point about the shop was that the older women had the exact same job as the younger women, even though they had been there much longer.

Not only was the job the women did at Johnson's tedious; clearly, the chance for advancement was slight. For this reason, men didn't want the job. Indeed, it seems that wherever women work, men don't. Women are hired to work in traditional women's jobs, with other women. They can usually be seen in jobs where the pay is low and there is little chance for advancement.

Did Tony's ever stop to think that displaying women in front of a counter and telling them to smile continuously was humiliating to these women? Did Simmons or Johnson's ever consider that the high point of these jobs was the exciting act of bringing the finished pieces to the other side of the room? Companies that are run by men don't seem to care how bored or ridiculous their women employees look, as long as the profit comes in. Women need the money, and men don't see anything wrong with the way things are. Realizing this, I am going to school to train for a traditional "man's job," so I won't be forced to work in a job with no future.

Jody Doyle

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78-78



DIGNITY OF LABOR.

From whence originated the idea, that it was derogatory to a lady's dignity, or a blot upon the female character, to labor? and who was the first to say, sneeringly, 'Oh, she *works* for a living'? Surely, such ideas and expressions ought not to grow on republican soil. The time has been, when ladies of the first rank were accustomed to busy themselves in domestic employment.

Homer tells us of princesses who used to draw water from the springs, and wash with their own hands the finest of the linen of their respective families. The famous Lucretia used to spin in the midst of her attendants; and the wife of Ulysses, after the siege of Troy, employed herself in weaving, until her husband returned to Ithaca. And in later times, the wife of George the Third, of England, has been represented as spending a whole evening in hemming pocket-handkerchiefs, while her daughter Mary sat in the corner, darning stockings.

Few American fortunes will support a woman who is above the calls of her family; and a man of sense, in choosing a companion to jog with him through all the up-hills and down-hills of life, would sooner choose one who *had* to work for a living, than one who thought it beneath her to soil her pretty hands with manual labor, although she possessed her thousands. To be able to earn one's own living by laboring with the hands, should be reckoned among female accomplishments; and I hope the time is not far distant when none of my countrywomen will be ashamed to have it known that they are better versed in useful, than they are in ornamental accomplishments.

C. B.

—Caroline Bean, *Lowell Offering*, May 1842

THE EXPERIENCE

Woman has a right to a sexual life as freely realized as is that of a man.¹ How true a statement, yet how deceiving. In today's society sexual freedom is seen as a person's right. Women everywhere are starting to believe they have a right to control their bodies. This couldn't be further from the truth.

I am the youngest of three. I was raised in a pleasant atmosphere and given everything I desired (to a point). However, affection was never openly expressed in my home. I attended a private girls' school from ages five to thirteen. I was taught my body was dirty, that babies were received only through constant prayer and that you must never let a boy lay on top of you. My parents backed this up because we are "good" Catholics, and nuns only speak the truth. Enter power structure number one, organized religion.

From there I entered a public high school. To borrow a famous book title, it was "The Awakening." I entered the co-ed world where necking in cars is fun, if you don't go "too far". I enjoyed life to what I thought was "its fullest." I had been raised to be a "good girl", and when I stepped out of line, I was plagued with guilt. Guilt, I was to learn, is a horrible feeling. It can eat at you night and day for years. And so my life continued

I entered college at the ripe old age of seventeen. I was determined to succeed. I wanted to make my parents proud. I wanted to make myself proud. In that order. But there were boys, beer, and all night parties.

My third month in college I trucked myself down to Florence Crittendon with little paper bag in hand. Two days later I phoned for the results. "Congratulations, you're pregnant." Congratulations? "Sorry for your troubles" would have been more appropriate!

I didn't know my body then, but in the month to follow I learned fast.

Pressure, pressure, where do I begin to explain the anguish? Daddy's little girl down the tubes. I must say I had one thing going for me. I had a dear friend, much older than I who volunteered her services. However, we both found out very quickly that at age seventeen the clinics are not waiting with open arms for your one hundred and fifty dollars. Enter power structure number two: the legal structure.

And so I waited. I went through the hell of morning sickness that lasts all day long. The constant state of exhaustion. My girlfriends who were unable to accept my decision because they, like myself, were "good Catholic girls." I was subjected to "Right to Life" pamphlets by one friend to the point that I would become nauseous with guilt. And I heard what my chances were of becoming sterile.

Finally my day came. Two days after my eighteenth birthday and two days before Christmas I arrived at the door of the Charles Street Clinic, frightened, feeling alone, and as if I were carrying the world on my back.

The first procedure was group therapy. I had to sit with a group of ten women and explain how I had gotten into this condition. The woman next to me swore she knew me. I was in a state of shock. Next the counselor went over the operation with her plastic replicas. The testing having already been completed, the discussion over, I was escorted into the operating room.

Enter power structure number three, the medical profession. I had never in my life gone to a gynecologist. I had never seen the much talked about stirrups. I had never felt a spec-

trum. I had never seen "the machine". I can say in all honesty, I wished that I were dead when I realized what was ahead of me in the minutes that were to follow.

The doctor came in. As I remember, he was an older man with an accent. He was from Boston City Hospital. I wasn't told his name, or if I was, I can't remember. His first and last demeaning comment was, "Well, young lady, how did you get into this predicament?" I answered, "Ignorance." It was all over in five minutes. I was free again.

After an hour of rest I was sent out into the world again. But not until I was lectured on the facts of the wonderful "pill." Buy this little pill and all your worries will disappear! Keep a pharmaceutical company in business: give them control of your body. Having no other alternatives, and being out one-hundred and fifty bucks, I agreed to take them.

I was free physically. But mentally, they couldn't wipe the memory out as easily. Guilt, it plagued me. I was a killer. I believed that for the longest time.

Since that period of my life, I had to make quite a few decisions. I had to reevaluate my religion. I decided it was one thing to believe in God, and quite another to believe in the Pope. I had to decide when I felt a child becomes a child. I had to overcome my fear of men. I had to learn about my body. I had to learn that life isn't peaches and cream for the little girl who got everything she wanted.

But I didn't feel defeated. For everything, and everyone who helped shape me, didn't break me, but made me what I am now.

Footnotes

¹Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 58.



AGED SISTERS

by Sally Chevalier

Aged sisters, together
existing in a cartoon of life
illustrated in black and white.
Drinking from stoneware saucers
Saving the china tea cups for
company forty years late.
Each telling her secret thoughts
to the same cat, who looks
sympathetically at his own lot in life.
Neither one ready to die, but both refuse to live.



AFTERNOONS OF YOUTH

by Sally Chevalier

Afternoons of youth

Surrounded by the sounds

of sewing

clicking of scissors

dropping of pins

The smell of steam from

a pressing iron

Mother keeping herself busy

Could it possibly be enjoyment.

Sitting in a rocky chair

at the age of seven

Watching Dialing for Dollars

with Francis the Talking mule

Mickey Rooney and

five from the top or

was it twelve from the bottom

Wondering where I would be

at twenty.

Would I be like her

The thought somehow

depressed me

There must be more

more than threading the machine

or plugging in the iron

and watching re-runs

of old movies

caring for children

and cooking meals

RADICAL FEMINISM

AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by Judi Eigner

The women's movement today is extremely diversified in its goals, ideologies, and members. There are many different theories about the causes of women's oppression and what is needed to overcome it. However,

the diversity of viewpoints and the number of independent groups that are involved in the women's movement is a strength—not a weakness. There is a great need for experimentation, both in organizational forms and in tactics. As long as there are many groups, if one or another gets sidetracked into non-productive activities or even disintegrates, the movement is not endangered.¹

Within the movement today, basically three ideologies exist: socialism, moderate-reformism, and radicalism. The socialist feminists for the most part follow Marx. They see the origin of women's subordination lying in the class system. They feel that destruction of capitalism and its replacement by a classless, socialist society, is a necessary precondition to a non-sexist society. For the socialist feminists, the women's liberation movement is merely part of a socialist revolution. The moderates do not emphasize theory as to the origins of women's oppression or how it is maintained. They are chiefly concerned with integrating women into the mainstream of society. Groups like NOW (National Organization for Women) work politically, and basically feel that sexism can be destroyed by working through the system. The radicals emphasize biology as the main reason for women's oppression, particularly women's reproductive role. They "do not believe that women should be integrated into the male world so that they can be 'just as good as men'."² The complete elimination of the patriarchal society is seen as the way to eliminate sexism.

Radical Ideology

Radicals feel that there should be no characteristics, behavior, or roles according to sex. They want to eliminate the beliefs that men are active, women are passive and emotional, and so forth. This is why they are called "radical": they want to bring about fundamental changes in our society. They are attacking basic beliefs about marriage, sex, masculinity and femininity.

Most radicals seem to take a behavioral psychologist point of view that we are conditioned by our environment—or simply, girls are taught to be inferior. This appears to me to be a valid argument, for it is obvious that little girls are brought up differently than little boys. The radical feminist led the way in encouraging her daughters to play with trucks and allowing her sons to play with dolls; no sex role socialization. The underlying idea is a simple one. If there were no sex roles people would come together as human beings and greater human potential would be used. Many articles have been written on different aspects of socialization ranging from commentary on pink and blue hospital bracelets for infants (which shows the emphasis our society places on a person's sex) to criticisms of the media. These articles point out that in today's society, success for a woman is attracting a man, getting married and having babies. A man compared to a woman, has unlimited possibilities. He can grow up to become President of the United States, but a woman still can only hope to marry the President.

Because the radical feminists want to eliminate sex roles, their views regarding the institution of marriage are very negative. Some of the early radical organizations set a quota for married members. One such organization, The Feminists, organized in the late 60's in New

York, states in its manifesto that no more than one-third of its members may be married or living with a man. The radicals believe that marriage is one of the basic institutions that oppress women. Because a woman can bear children, she is expected to stay home, care for them and raise them. The word "housewife" tells us many things about a woman's duty. A slave is what most radical feminists would call a wife. Their rationale is simple:

The legal responsibilities of the wife include providing all necessary domestic services—that is, maintaining the home (cleaning, cooking, washing, purchasing food and other necessities, etc.) providing for her husband's personal needs and taking care of the children—the husband in return is obligated only to provide her with basic maintenance—that is, bed and board. Were he to employ a live-in servant in place of a wife, he would have to pay the servant a salary, provide her with her own room (as opposed to 'bed'), food, and the necessary equipment for doing her job. She would get at least one day a week off and probably would not be required to provide sexual services. Thus, being a wife is a full-time job for which one is not entitled to receive pay.³

Because the radical feminists feel so strongly against marriage, motherhood, etc., many people (both men and women) feel that they are "man-haters." This is not the case. The radicals do not hate men, but look upon them as the oppressors. They feel that men receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from our patriarchal society, and women receive none.

Origins

There were several incidents which led up to the formation of not only the radical wing but the movement as we know it today. It began around 1964-1965 when the women's question was brought up in organizations that were dedicated towards human rights, and was laughed at. One of these organizations was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the other was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Women in both these organizations brought up the subject of rights for women and were ridiculed. The men were completely shocked by such a proposal and felt there were more important things to devote their time to.

A few years later, in 1967, at the Chicago Convention for New Politics the same thing happened. Again, women wanted to discuss the women's situation and again, were met with opposition from the men. Two women, Shulamith Firestone and Jo Freeman, who attended the convention, decided to do something about it. Jo formed the Women's Radical Action Project (WRAP) in Chicago. This group consisted primarily of former members of the SDS. Shulamith went to New York where she formed the New York Radical Women. Thus, "the 1976 Chicago convention generated women's groups in Chicago and New York, the two cities that were the first centers of new feminism."⁴ These two organizations were basically concerned with getting more women involved in the movement. They devoted most of their time to writing and sending out newsletters to recruit more members.

As time went on, more and more women were joining the groups and more groups were formed. One very important organization was a group out of New York called Redstockings. They stated that their "chief task... is to develop female consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions."⁵ What this particular organization did was develop a theory of consciousness-raising. This theory and practice was to bring many more women into the movement. Consciousness-raising meant that a group of women would get together at somebody's home or other meeting place and discuss their positions as women. These discussions brought more women into tune with each other. They realized that they were not alone in their predicaments. The women would develop theories and ideologies and strategies to combat their problems. Eventually the numbers of these small groups grew and they joined forces with larger groups and yet larger groups. It was amazing how much consciousness-raising contributed to the growth of the movement. These smaller groups have continued to form and are still forming to give the movement the strength it needs.

Activities

The radical wing of the movement has been very active in trying to change the female role. Within the movement, members who adopt what is thought of as the most radical position regarding personal appearance....

avoid colorful clothes, cut their fashionably long hair, cease shaving their legs and underarms, and even smile less. Such behavior is often the culmination of a genuine moral struggle to cast off what are objectively unimportant but subjectively highly symbolic aspects of their old role.⁶

These women are taking an active part in trying to change the sex roles. Most radicals don't go this far, however; they direct much energy to attacking institutions themselves, such as the media and advertising companies. They have organized campaigns to write to companies and threaten to boycott the products. They have staged sit-ins (for example the March 1970 sit-in of the *Ladies Home Journal*) and organized demonstrations (for example, the 1968 protest of the Miss America Contest). Stickers saying "this ad exploits women" or "this ad is an insult to women" were made to put up on billboards, in buses or subways, or anywhere there was a sexist advertisement. These campaigns have not been without results: they have managed to change some things. A good example was the elimination of the Geritol commercial in which the man states, "My wife, I think I'll keep her."

The radicals have devoted most of their time, however, to setting up counter-institutions within our society that cater to women. They have organized women's clinics, feminist schooling (such as women's studies programs), rape crisis centers, and child care centers. Also falling into this category are women's centers, bookstores, periodicals, and publishing houses. The radicals hope these counter-institutions will serve as models for a future society.

As far as changes through the law are concerned, the radicals are not the most active. Moderates, feeling that change can be accomplished by working with the law, devote most of their time to bringing about legal change. They tend to be very structured, and organize campaigns and lobby to apply pressure for reform. The radicals are not as organized for such political activity, but they do have demonstrations. The radicals and socialists are similar in this respect. Both are not as involved in legal change because they do not believe reform is sufficient. They feel that reforms do help improve conditions for women, and keeping pressure on the system will bring the revolution nearer. The reforms are not an end in themselves, however, as is the case with the moderates; they are merely a means towards a more distant goal.

Opposition

There has been much opposition not only to the radical wing of the movement but to the entire movement as well. As was mentioned, the radicals have been called "man haters." This is not the only name they have acquired; others have called them lesbians. One phrase developed, "Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice."

Such opposition has been true not only of men but among women as well. Many women fear being considered "unfeminine" or "unwomanly" if they are for women's liberation. There are housewives who are against the movement because they fear it might take away the little securities they have like alimony and child support. There are also many housewives who enjoy their roles as wives and mothers and fear that will be destroyed. And many are against the movement because they feel chivalry should not die along with tradition.

Conclusion

In spite of opposition, the women's movement in all its aspects has made good progress. It has grown from a handful of members to thousands nationwide and around the globe. Most everyone is familiar with the movement or has at least heard of it.

It has not succeeded in making any radical changes, but it is still young and the changes must take place slowly. I believe that small changes, one at a time, will bring women closer to emancipation. "Liberation consists. . . in both male and female being free to become truly human."⁷ It will take a long time for it to occur, but the radical feminists do not look like they will give up until their goals are reached.

Footnotes

¹Barbara Deckard, *The Women's Movement* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 436.

²Bonnie Kreps, "Radical Feminism 1," *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), p. 239.

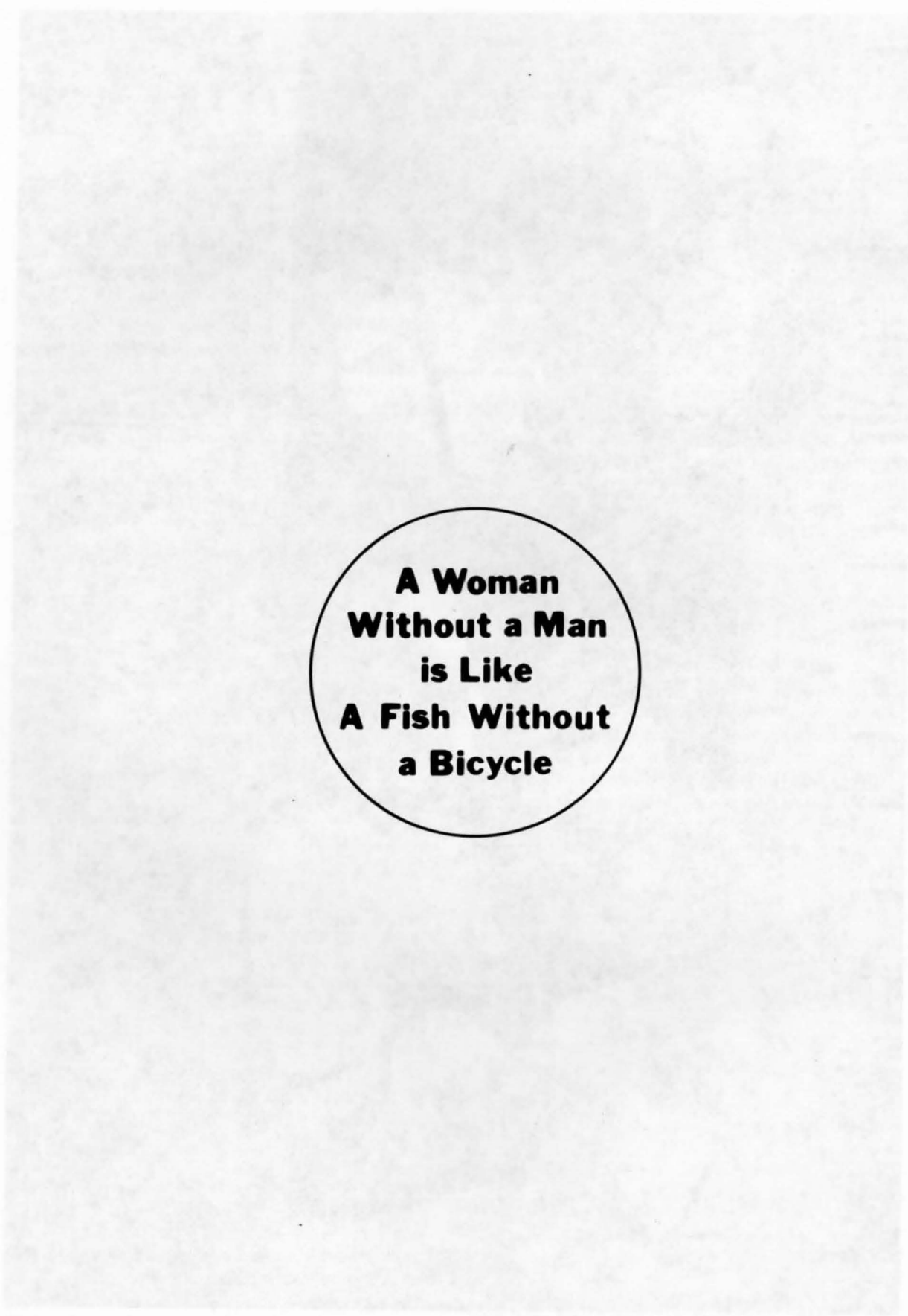
³Sheila Cronan, "Marriage," *Radical Feminism*, p. 217.

⁴Roberta Salper, ed., *Female Liberation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 172.

⁵"Redstockings Manifesto," *Masculine/Feminine*, ed. Betty Roszak and Theodore Roszak (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 274.

⁶Maren Lockwood Carden, *The New Feminist Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), p. 55.

⁷Deckard, p. 425.



**A Woman
Without a Man
is Like
A Fish Without
a Bicycle**

